

Lesson Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

Lesson ID: 92559-33425

Title: LENGTH OF STAY IN AREA OF OPERATION (AO)

Operation/Exercise Name: MARFOR PROMOTE LIBERTY Observed: 13 Jun 1990

Originator: COMMARFOR PANAMA

POC: LTCOL FAWCETT Commercial: (919)451-2620 DSN: 4842620

5. (U) OBSERVATION:

In a low intensity conflict (LIC) length of time a unit stays in an area of operations (AO) effects the success of the unit.

6. (U) DISCUSSION:

Marine Forces (MARFOR) Panama attacked this problem in 2 different ways. The original company to occupy Arraijan, Panama, India 3/6, chose to keep the same platoon in town for the entire 90 days. Keeping the platoon in longer had several advantages, it allowed the Marines to become intimately familiar with the AO; and it allowed them to become familiar with the people and the Panamanian National Police (PNP). On the other hand, the next company, Lima 3/6, chose to rotate detachments through the towns every 2 weeks. Although this exposed more Marines to the present mission, they did not have the same "feel" for the people nor did they know their AO as well. It is estimated that it took about 30 days to be familiar with the people, terrain and the PNP. After 60 days burnout and complacency had to be guarded against.

7. (U) LESSON LEARNED:

Units need to remain in the same AO for not less than 30 days in order to become familiar enough with the people, terrain and local police to be effective in a LIC.

8. (U) RECOMMENDED ACTION:

In LIC rotate detachments in AOs at not less than 30 day and preferably 60 day intervals.

9. (U) COMMENTS:

None stated.

* * * * *